

# Fruits of the Rosary



by Father Jacques-Marie Louis Monsabre, O.P.

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# **The Joyful Mysteries**

# I. The Annunciation of the Most Blessed Virgin - Humility

Having given ourselves to the contemplation of Jesus and Mary in the Rosary, let us now apply ourselves to gathering the fruits of these divine mysteries.



The Annunciation, in bringing to our minds the annihilation of the Word of God and the modest attitude of the Most Holy Virgin in presence of the homage given and the honors promised to Her, presents to our minds the virtue of humility as its practical fruit.

To make one's self little, to put one's self down even to the ground (*ad humum*), is the process energetically expressed by the word Humility. The desire to rise above all and to surpass all is the movement of the heart no less energetically expressed by the word Pride - *superbia*. Both in heaven and on earth pride has been the fatal principle of all ruin, of all corruption; humility is the principle of salvation, the corner-stone of our perfection. By Her purity Mary was pleasing to God; by Her humility she attracted the uncreated Word to Her chaste womb. The Word offered Himself from all eternity to His Father for love of us; but it was by humbling Himself He commenced effectually the work of our salvation. Mary is the most beautiful of creatures; but She teaches us Herself that humility is the cause of Her greatness: "For it was because He regarded the humility of His handmaid" that She became the Mother of God. "Jesus is crowned with glory and honor, and invested with royal power over all the works of God"; but it is because "God has made Him a little less than the angels." (Psalm 8)

This is the order and design of Eternal Wisdom. "God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble" (James 4:6). And in the Magnificat the Blessed Virgin again says: "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart; He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and He hath exalted the humble." It was indeed well-pleasing to this great God to employ His omnipotence about our nothingness. Now, humility makes us draw near to nothingness; it creates in the human soul a mysterious emptiness which the divine goodness hastens to fill.

Nothing is more agreeable to God than this virtue; nothing more amiable among men. The humble man, thinking himself the least of all, envies no one and puts himself at the service of all. The humble man, in ignoring himself, makes little of no one, restrains no one in his rights, clashes with no one, bears umbrage to no one. The humble man, casting a discreet veil over his virtues and merits, does not hold them out as a lesson for any one; but, just because he hides them, they are sought for that their saving perfume may be inhaled. The humble man is sweet of heart, imitating herein the life of Him who invited all "to learn of Him, because He was meek and humble of heart." Behold what humility is!

What relation do we bear to this fundamental virtue of the Christian life? Perhaps we have not reached its first degree, which consists in the sincere conviction that everything we possess of good comes to us from God. If we miserably puff up ourselves so as to be unwilling to see anything above ourselves, what vanity! How many secret glances of delight we cast upon our little perfections! How many agreeable excuses are made for our imperfections and faults! How many deceptive and false comparisons we make! What unjust preferences we entertain! What ridiculous admiration we give way to! With how many interior adulations we

delight ourselves! Finally, how many reasons do we give to God to withdraw Himself from us!

Let us enter into ourselves and beg of Jesus and Mary to put us on the pathway of true humility.

To refer to God and give Him homage for all the good in us is the first step in this pathway.

Not to take to heart the comparisons which our self-love turns to our advantage; not to be disturbed in regard to the gifts possessed by others, and ever to put ourselves tranquilly in our own place - this is the second step.

To be well acquainted with ourselves by self-examination, and, when we shall have discovered all our faults and all the germs of iniquity that lie hid in our corrupt nature, to esteem ourselves as the last of men - this is the third step.

Still advancing, and, knowing that we are the last of men, to believe sincerely that we are worthy of contempt - this is the fourth step.


From the sentiment of our unworthiness let us pass to its realization in action. Let us receive contempt with patience. Behold the fifth step. Let us not bargain about contempt, but rather let us desire it, go to meet it, and seek in it our purest joy. This is the sixth step.

A supreme effort is this: If God loads us with the favors only accorded to holy souls, and we only regard our corruption and nothingness; if we are confounded with the immensity of His goodness, as He forgot Himself in deigning to look upon us - this is the perfection of humility.

If we are thus humble it is well. The foundation of the spiritual life is laid. On its depth depends its solidity. The

deeper we sink it the higher and more magnificent will be the edifice that God's grace will build in our souls.

## **II. The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin - Fraternal Charity**

It is charity that speaks to the heart of Mary and brings Her  across the difficult mountain country to visit Her cousin Elizabeth. Our holy Mother thus puts in practice beforehand the divine Gospel precept upon which Jesus will insist so much in His mortal life: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." (John 13)

After the supreme command to love God above all things, the love of our neighbor takes the next highest place in the Christian life. Our Blessed Saviour says "it is like the first." Both loves are so closely connected, support one another so well, work so harmoniously, that we cannot possess the one without the other. Without the love of God there is no fraternal charity; without fraternal charity there is no love of God.

Is there no room to doubt of the union of these two precepts in our actual relations with ourselves and the world? What egotism in poor human hearts! What egotism even in Christian hearts! We love ourselves extremely well; and, for the most part, that which appears to be the evidence of affection is only a cloak under which we hide the workings of our own pleasure or advantage.

Let us seek an example of true charity in the mystery now under consideration. In our visits and social relations with our neighbors we ought, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin, never to bring with us anything but timely assistance, good counsel, edification, and the grace of God.



More frequently, or - will I say it? - mostly always, our visits are those of interest, in which we seek to treat of something profitable to ourselves: visits of vanity, in which we wish to display our good looks or finery of dress; visits of curiosity, in which we busy ourselves to see and to hear many things that we might as well, and even ought to, let alone; visits of idleness, in which we endeavor to kill time which solitude makes too heavy on our hands; visits of malice, in which we devour with much relish the reputation of our neighbor; visits of sensuality, in which our senses are fed upon gross pleasures and our hearts upon familiarities more than doubtful. To entertain ourselves with our brethren on the principles of pure charity is rare indeed.

If we love, it is often blindly and inconsiderately. Natural advantages are more in our eyes than those of grace; charms of body and mental endowments attract us more commonly than splendor of virtue; we are more given to what pleases us than to what deserves our pleasure; we are less taken with what is useful than with what flatters us. In brief, instead of seeking in our neighbor God alone as the supreme object of our love, it is to ourselves we really direct our attention as to the definitive object of our affections. Hence come antipathies and repugnances without any reasonable motive; hence also unjust preferences, undeserved benevolence, and generosity without the least merit before God.

Christian, learn from the Apostle of the Gentiles what fraternal charity ought to be:

It never looks after its own advantages: "Charity seeketh not its own." (1 Corinthians 13)

It is not ambitious of honors or of the esteem of men: "Charity is not ambitious."

It bears patiently the imperfections, faults, and defects of others. Nothing can break its love: "Charity is patient."

It is unwilling even to think evil, so great is its dread of the violent impulses which disturb the peaceful tenor of its honest affections: "Charity thinketh no evil; is not provoked to anger."

Far from being saddened in view of the talents, good qualities, or good fortune of others, it rejoices in them, as if everything great, good, or happy within its sphere belonged to itself: "Charity envieth not."


It always seeks directly the true, objects of Christian love: "Charity dealeth not perversely."

It has pity on sinners and expands its joy upon the just in whose souls the image of God shines forth in all its splendor: "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth."

It is kind, sweet, forward to oblige, compassionate; it spends itself, it is prodigal of good, more especially of spiritual good. It is replete with consolation, encouragement, good counsel, holy doctrine, and the aroma of virtue: "Charity is kind."

Oh, beautiful virtue! Let us ask it of Jesus and Mary, and beg them to penetrate us with it and fix it indelibly in our souls.

### **III. The Birth of Our Saviour in Bethlehem - Detachment**

The soul and heart are regulated by humility and charity.   
The next step to be taken in the way of perfection is to remove the obstacles that lie in that royal road. These are principally temporal, goods, corruption of the senses, and self-will. To this effect we find three virtues successively proposed to us in the last three Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary- namely, detachment, purity, and obedience.

Let us go to the crib of Bethlehem and give ear to its teaching. Jesus is born in a stable, is laid upon a little straw, is poorly covered by scanty swaddling clothes. The heart of His Mother is wrung with grief because She has not for Him even what the poorest mothers ordinarily have. Bear in mind, dear Christian, that it is not fatality or the caprice of fortune that imposed on the Infant Jesus this great misery; He voluntarily took it upon Himself. Master of all things, He could have been born, like earthly kings, in a grand palace decorated with the richest tapestry; He could have surrounded Himself with servants ready to move at his beck; He might have been provided abundantly, even luxuriously, with everything necessary, useful, or agreeable. He preferred to be despoiled of all to teach us to despoil ourselves.

The crib is the first pulpit of the Christian teacher. Listen, it says to us, listen, O Christian! and learn that the goods of this world are not made for you; they are brittle and uncertain; they are without honor; they are burdensome and dangerous!

Today you possess them, but tomorrow capricious fortune may snatch them from your hands. And even when you have taken every precaution to hold them till the last moment of your life, the hour will come at length when you will be separated from them for ever and present yourself before the tribunal of God empty-handed!

You possess them, but of what value are they to your heart and soul? May not a man be the most ignorant, the most silly, the most ridiculous, and the most contemptible of men, and yet have money in abundance? Can grace and virtue, the only treasures that are never lost, be bought with gold?

You possess them; but how many anxieties, cares, troubles, plans, labors, unquiet desires, how many inconveniences to increase them or preserve them as you received them, weigh down your soul and body!

You possess them; but you should know that they have a fatal power of fascinating you and of engendering in your heart a mad love which dries the sacred sources of compassion, petrifies the heart and makes it hard and unfeeling to the poor. Riches produce an insatiable thirst for more; criminal desires also which make a man ready for shameless injustice. They beget a spirit of vain ostentation, which in turn produces extravagant and scandalous luxury. Riches multiply temptations, and open to the human soul all the avenues of corruption.

This is the reason why our divine Master chose to be born in poverty, want, and misery; this is why the saints, after His example, have generally stripped themselves of all worldly goods.

In presence of the crib let us detach ourselves from all worldly and sensual desires.

If we possess nothing, let us not envy those who are rich. Let us not give to the world the ridiculous and wretched spectacle of those poor for whom God has prepared and made easy the road to perfection and salvation, yet who encumber themselves with restless and feverish desires.

If we possess something let us resolutely detach our hearts. Let us be of the number of those of whom our Blessed Saviour speaks: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Let us possess riches only to carry out good and noble works, representing herein the providence of God towards the poor. Let us endeavor to open for ourselves an avenue to the hearts and souls of the wretched who murmur against their hard lot; thus we may become to them pioneers of God's truth and grace and make for ourselves friends in heaven.

If we are detached in this manner we will see, without the least regret, the approach of our supreme and final deprivation; we will turn the vulgar and precarious goods of this world into the eternal goods of heaven; we will live tranquilly, sweetly abandoning ourselves to the holy will of God; we will keep steadily in the path of perfection, our hearts being closed against the seduction of riches; then will we have a true claim upon the caresses and benevolence of Jesus, the King of all the poor.

## **IV. The Purification of the Most Blessed Virgin - Purity**

In obeying the Mosaic law which imposed upon Her the ceremony of purification, to which She was not obliged - for She had conceived without sin and was delivered without stain to Her virginity - Mary teaches us that we ought to watch with jealous care over the perfect integrity of body and soul, and proposes to us as the fruit of this mystery the holy virtue of purity.



Purity is an angelic virtue, a life-giving virtue, a lightsome virtue, a generous virtue, a virtue privileged of God.

An angelic virtue: It enables us to live in the corruptible flesh as the angels live in heaven. Whilst impurity brings us down to the likeness of brute beasts, chastity raises us to the condition of the angelic life, with this advantage of the man above the angel, that the purity of man is the fruit of combats delivered and of victories gained over the flesh, which tends to oppress the spirit.

A life-giving virtue: Purity reaches the very sources of existence and preserves a long time our fragile lives, like the oil of a lamp which preserves the flickering light until the time comes to extinguish it. But the vice of impurity exhausts and destroys in a short time the most prosperous and well-endowed lives.

It is a lightsome virtue: Purity disengages and simplifies the mind and prepares it to bring to perfection intellectual operations. So says Saint Thomas of Aquin. And as pure and limpid waters preserve in all their fullness the images they

reflect, so likewise does the - pure soul preserve a luminous representation of eternal principles. Science unfolds to it and engraves upon it the sovereign intelligence, which is God. As we read in the book of Wisdom: "Incorruption draws us near to the incorruptible God." Christ, our Lord, has promised to this virtue a vision of the divine mysteries: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." In effect the chaste soul sees God everywhere, not only in the truths of faith which reveal to us the mysteries of His life, but also in the open book of the universe in which His perfections are written. Whilst some pass by the most ravishing scenes of nature carelessly and unconsciously, and others feed upon their beauty with selfish eagerness, the chaste soul delays, contemplates, admires the surrounding grandeur, and silently passes from the creature to its Creator who has prepared it all; and the song of praise commenced in the beauties of the earth, in the hearing of the pure soul, ascends to heaven to be lost in its depths. On the contrary, impurity, in imparting to the spirit much of the animal nature, drags it down from the native height of its conceptions to the shadows of a troubled flesh, and blinds it to such an extent that it cannot see God, even where His presence is most manifest.

Purity is a generous virtue: It purifies love, dilates the heart, and imparts to it the spirit of sacrifice and immolation, in which the greatest works of charity, both temporal and spiritual, have their origin, at the head of which we always find souls that shine brightly in the purity of their devotedness. Impurity, on the other hand, returns and directs all its extravagances of sentiment towards the miserable me which gives nothing except for its own enjoyment.

Finally, purity is a privileged virtue of God: To virgin souls He accords His greatest favors. It was a virgin He made choice

of to be the Mother of His Son; it was on the bosom of the virgin apostle Jesus reposed at His Last Supper; to the same apostle He confided the care of His holy Mother; we read in the Apocalypse that in heaven it is virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and who sing a new canticle which no one else can sing. Impurity, on the contrary, renders a man abominable in the eyes of God - abominable even to the point of disgust - and made Him say in the book of Genesis that "it repented Him to have made man."

Purity is, then, one of the most charming and amiable of virtues; but let us be on our guard: it is also the most frequently attacked, the most sensitive, and the most delicate of virtues. The flesh is its enemy and conspires incessantly against it; and the seductions of the world, too often in league with the appetites of the flesh, expose us constantly to the danger of losing it. Even within the fortress of a body never stained with its defilement it may receive mortal stabs. A thought, a desire, one of those reveries of the soul in which the imagination feeds itself with dangerous images, is sufficient to tarnish its beauty and to quench its light.

Let us be careful! We must preserve our purity by a constant vigilance over the senses, always open windows through which death rushes in; by mortification, which weakens concupiscence; by prayer, which secures to us God's assistance; by meditation, which gives birth to holy thoughts and heavenly desires; by the sacraments, which fortify the spirit against the flesh and are the seed of virginity; by devotion to Mary, Virgin most pure, the natural protectress of chastity.

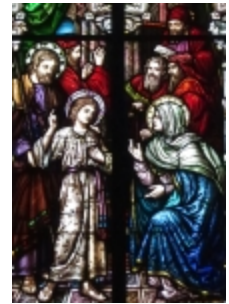
If we have had the misfortune to have lost this precious virtue, let us purify ourselves by repentance and salutary austerity, even to that extent that the shadow of our past



falls may give more eclat to our purity now reconquered for ever.

## **V. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple - Obedience**

When the Virgin Mother found Her Child in the temple She said to Him: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Jesus answered: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about the things that are My Father's?" And the Gospel adds: "He went down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them." (Luke 2:48, etc.) But before this Mary had shown Her submission. The words of Jesus had sunk deeply into Her heart; She carefully kept them in mind and constantly meditated on them.



Therefore both Jesus and Mary speak to us in this mystery one word: "Obey."

To obey is to submit one's own will to the will of a superior. Of all obstacles to Christian perfection one's own will is the most dangerous, because it is surely the most persistent. By unforeseen accidents we may be deprived of all our earthly goods, and make a virtue of necessity by resigning ourselves to poverty; the ardor of the senses may grow cold with age or sickness, but our will remains always; and it is nearly the same thing that it should not exist at all as to deny or renounce itself. This renunciation is difficult, yes, almost cruel, for our will is, of all things we possess, that to which we most strongly cling. More than anything else we possess it marks, defines, and tends to realize our personality.

It is also that which God values more than all other goods, and He esteems the sacrifice of it as more precious than all

others. "Obedience is better than victims," He tells us by His prophet.

Besides being agreeable to God, obedience is supremely advantageous to ourselves, for it merits the particular favors of those to whom it is due; it secures to us a profound peace by relieving us of responsibility in many circumstances wherein our own will might lead us astray.

The religious person in particular who wishes to please God and prepare for himself the road of perfection immolates by vow his own will and with it all his goods. In certain religions orders the formula of profession contains only the vow of obedience. This grand , and royal vow carries with it to the altar upon which the religious offers himself the pleasures of the world and the allurements of flesh and blood.

God does not demand of all such a total renunciation, but He imposes upon all the obligation of obedience. It is the necessary condition of all order. Suppress obedience and you will at once inaugurate the reign of caprice and folly. Then all society, divine and human, would become impossible. Alas! we know it too well. It is the spirit of independence and revolt that troubles at present the family, the state, and the church itself.

Not less but rather more imperiously than the voice of God do we hear the voice of revolution and disorder say to us: "You must obey."

But let us examine what should be the qualities of our obedience.

It should be supernatural and noble; that is to say, it should rise to the principle of all authority. In submitting our will we should carefully avoid motives of interest, natural affection, effeminacy, baseness, or sloth. Man, how great soever he

may be, has no inherent right to the admirable sacrifice implied by obedience. If he aims at ruling over the will of others solely to gratify the instincts of commanding them, he deserves only the contempt that may result in scornful resistance. He who has real self-respect will not submit himself except to God or for His sake.

We owe obedience to our parents and to our temporal and spiritual superiors when they command what is just. Then it is God that speaks, and it is Him we obey. We should be careful while obeying men to be ever at the service of our Father in heaven. "Did you not know," said the child Jesus, "that I should be engaged, in My Father's affairs?"

From the moment that the will of God is expressed by those who represent Him let no proud murmurs be heard or critical judgments; for our obedience should be humble.

Let no mental reservations or pretenses mar the effect of our obedience, which should be sincere.

Let us not bring into our obedience a choice between what is agreeable and what is not. It must be generous. Let there be no hesitation or delays. Our obedience should be prompt. It should be cheerful, avoiding all complaints and excuses.

Taken all in all, it is doubtless hard to obey perfectly, so many passions circumvent the will, and impede its free oblation. But let us lovingly take the hand of Jesus and Mary: they will bring us along with them in the road of perfect submission; and, to make us walk the more steadily, they will induce us to sing with joyful hearts the victories of obedience. "The obedient man will speak of victories."  
(Proverbs 20)

# **The Dolorous Mysteries**

## VI. The Agony in the Garden - Hatred of Sin

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord" is the invitation given to contemplate the joyful mysteries. "Destroy the empire of sin and follow in the blood-stained footsteps of your Saviour." This is the invitation to contemplate the sorrowful mysteries. The first fruit proposed to us in the agony in the garden of Gethsemani is hatred of sin.



Jesus has taken upon Himself a frightful responsibility. He, who was innocence and purity itself, is become in the eyes of His Father the living embodiment of sin. "Him who knew no sin He hath made sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5) And thus has He been bruised without pity by the anger of God. "He was bruised for our iniquities."

Behold, Christian soul, in what state He presents Himself to you in the garden of Gethsemani! Feeble, languid, bent down to the earth, covered with a sweat of blood! Why these sorrowful complaints, this mysterious fear, this profound disgust, this sudden faintness that brings Him to the gates of death? Alas! He sees sin; He is in dread of it He feels Himself penetrated with sin; God shows Him all the frightful evils He will endure for sin.

Is not sin, then, a most shocking evil, since the Heavenly Father chastises so pitilessly His only Son, who has made Himself responsible for its atonement? Yes. It is the supreme evil; it is an evil that stands alone in its deformity; to speak truly, there is no real evil but sin.

The infirmities and deficiencies of nature insult none of the divine perfections; this insults them all. It insults the majesty which it contemns, the goodness which it abuses, the wisdom whose designs it opposes, the omnipotence whose yoke it would throw off, the justice which it sets at naught. If it were in the power of sin God would cease to be, for, as far as it can, it destroys Him. It substitutes in place of the supreme good an inferior good, towards which it directs all the aspirations of the human soul; it strives to make the infirm reason and dependent will of the creature prevail against the infinite wisdom and sovereign power of the Creator. Unable to pull down the great God from His throne, it imposes upon Him the terrible necessity of opening for its punishment the eternal abyss, in which He, so good, so sweet, so clement, will be constrained to chastise it without pity and without respite for ever.

Sin, the enemy of God, is no less the enemy of man. It debases his reason; it forms perverse habits which enchain his liberty; it dries up the sources of the divine life which was added to his nature to raise it to the summit of its eternal destiny; it nullifies the merits of the past; it withers the good works of the present; it cheats its miserable dupe, to whom it promises happiness in exchange for his rebellion; in a word, it drags us down from the sublime condition in which, without vanity, we might call ourselves divine beings, to the condition of the brutes whose gross nature we consent to share. Hence the Psalmist has truly said: "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (48) Nay, more, the beast, by its instinct, acts the part which it can and ought to act; but this cannot be said of the sinner.

Sin being so great an evil, how comes it that such a vast multitude become guilty of it with so much facility and bear its yoke so lightly? The causes are ignorance, forgetfulness,

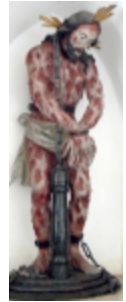
blindness. But is the Christian, enveloped in so much light, often recalled to his duty, even at the moment in which he examines his conscience to confess his faults before God, indifferent, cold, or insensible? Why do I doubt the sincerity of his contrition? A servile fear, a shame entirely human, a paltry uneasiness, a movement of the will merely of routine - behold what I see in many a soul instead of earnest regret, generous indignation against sin, loving protestations to be true henceforth to God, and strong resolutions by which hatred of sin is best shown.

Christian soul, go to Gethsemani, and, throwing yourself at the feet of your agonizing Saviour, learn to hate sin as it deserves. Forget, if you can, the pain it has brought on you, the shame it has caused. Think only of the inestimable benefits of which it has deprived you: think of the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost, the peace of heart, the consolations of Heaven, the fruit of your good works, the supernatural resources of the soul, the rightful claim to an eternal inheritance, the spiritual adoption by which you have become in Jesus Christ a true child of God; think of the blessed charity which enables you to say to God: My Friend! my Father! Nay, more, forget your own misfortunes in order to see only the infinite goodness of an offended God. He is the essential good, worthy of all love; you have abused His gifts; you have turned your back upon Him to run after lying goods. O miserable soul! speak to Him with a contrite and humble heart. O Father, so good, so amiable, so worthy of my love, it is I, and not Thy dear Son, that offended; it is I that ought to be chastised; it is I that ought to die of grief. Soften my hard heart; lacerate it with bitter regret; crush it with the weight of Thy anger; fill it with horror of all that in which it has offended Thee, and make it more an enemy of sin than sin has been its enemy.



## VII. The Scourging at the Pillar - Mortification of the Senses

When we consider the wounds opened by the cruel scourging in the sacred body of our dear Saviour, they seem to us like so many sadly eloquent mouths which say to us: "Mortify your senses."



Literally, "mortify" means to cause anything to die; and why should I cause my senses to die? Are they not the servants of the soul and the necessary instruments of the immaterial life? Open to the world outside of me, they receive the images which the activity of my mind unconsciously transforms, and by the aid of which it reaches ideas and even eternal principles. The sublime harmony of God's works penetrates through the senses even to the inner sanctuary of the soul, where the divine perfections are freely displayed, causing themselves to be known, admired, loved, adored, and blessed. When any of the senses is wanting to me my soul is, in a certain degree, mutilated; in this case there is always some work of God that I either know not at all or know imperfectly, some operation of the intellectual and moral life which I can perform only by halves.

Hence I ask again, Why mortify my senses, why cause them to die?

In real truth, we would owe them deep respect and honorable treatment if they were always faithful servants: but sin has perverted them. "Death, has entered by my windows," says the prophet Jeremias; and these windows are my senses.

The seductive images which awaken dangerous appetites in my flesh, the false brilliancy of objects which excite covetous desires, the endearing words which soothe my heart and steal away its affections, the impassioned discourses which violently excite and then deprave me, the perfumes which inebriate me and the gross delights in which I forget myself - all these enter by the senses. The servants of the soul are become the instruments of sin. How many faults, O God! are committed by the senses. Thou hast good reason to pronounce severe judgments upon them! "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it away; if thy right hand is dangerous to thy soul, cut it off and cast it from thee." And Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, tells us "to mortify our members." And in his epistle to the Romans (chapter 8) he says: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if, by the Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."

My God, I wish to live; and, in order to live, I wish to mortify my senses. I do not wish to destroy them absolutely, for they may be of service to my soul and instruments of my perfection; but to cause the death of everything in them that revolts against the spirit: rash impetuosity, restless investigations, evil delights, culpable complaisances - all this is what I wish.

To this effect I have need of constant watchfulness and unrelenting purpose. Whatever else may happen, I desire to save my soul from corruption.

Therefore I will say to my eyes: You shall not see; to my ears: You shall not hear; to the sense of smell: You shall not breathe; to my mouth: You shall not taste; to my hands and to all the members of my body: You shall touch neither images, nor forms, nor reports, nor discourses, nor perfumes, nor dishes, nor any other exterior thing which you desire

earnestly to the detriment of my soul. Touch not its life; I forbid you to bring death in upon me.

But if my senses will not obey this command, whether through surprise, negligence, or malice, I will most severely chastise their disobedience. After the example of the saints I will arm myself with an avenging discipline; I will beat down my flesh; I will make this untamed rebel tremble with fear under the blows of my scourging; I will teach it to submit. Every fault shall receive a punishment proportioned to its gravity, and then I will cry out with the Psalmist: "Thy rod and Thy staff, O Lord! have been my comforters." (Psalm 22)

## **VIII. The Crowning with Thorns - Mortification of the Spirit**

In this mystery the ignominy and suffering of Jesus reached His sacred Head.



Injured, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, He invites us to extend our mortification to the very head and throne of our nature - that is to say, the incorruptible spirit in which original grace had planted so many perfections, and into which original sin brought so many disorders.

How, then, am I to mortify my spirit? Certainly I cannot kill an immortal substance - that is impossible; I must not cause the death of its noble and pure aspirations towards the supreme good - this would be criminal; but I must put down every movement that is contrary to these aspirations.

There are two human creatures in us, says Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:47, etc.: "The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man from heaven, heavenly. Such as is the earthly, such also are the earthly; and such as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly. Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us also bear the image of the heavenly." That is to say, let the image of the heavenly man in us efface the image of the earthly man. This cannot be entirely completed until the glorious day of the resurrection. But, in waiting for that blessed day, we should endeavor to make the heavenly creature live in us, and condemn to death the creature of earth.

We strike this latter creature in its more material or more gross part when we mortify the senses; we reach it in its more subtle part when we mortify the spirit. Without this mortification of spirit the most severe and even bloody austerities are merely useless demonstrations, and even dangerous, inasmuch as they sometimes fill us with a false security. Military men tell us that it is not enough to secure the outposts of a fortification, but it is also necessary to restrain the rash ardor of the defenders within the walls and prevent their disastrous sallies, by means of which the enemy might get in.

Therefore let us keep the spirit in due bounds by mortification. Let the word be:

Death to those wandering thoughts and fickle desires which divide and scatter the powers of the soul and prevent us from being duly recollected before God.

Death to this mad eagerness with which we pursue the honor, glory, esteem, and consideration of men, as if these frivolous rewards could sufficiently compensate our talents, virtues, or merits,

Death to that anxiety which forces us to manifest ourselves to the world, to be or to appear something on the theatre of a day on which the interests and passions of the world are never at rest.

Death to that ill-directed thirst after knowledge which makes us forget the safe boundary line at which faith says to reason: "Halt! Beyond this line man should bring nothing but timid respect and silent admiration."

Death to those independent ideas which tend to withdraw our will from the just direction of the most venerable and best-founded authorities.

Death to those desires of domination which cause our imperious, exacting, and capricious will to weigh grievously upon our inferiors and even upon our equals.

Death to that overshadowing self-love which takes offence at everything; to that susceptibility ever in a flutter and ever unable and unwilling to bear the least contradiction.

Death to those petty jealousies, antipathies, and rancors which disturb peace and charity.

Death to those too ardent and tender affections which fill the heart with a created object before which the soul loses itself instead of being raised to God.

Death to all affections which absorb our attention and monopolize our hearts, as if there was nothing better for our love.

Death even to the sensible sweets and joys of devotion, in which the soul rests as if it were the terminus of its journey, whereas it should remember that all perfect souls have to pass through the desert before they arrive at the land of promise.

Courage! Courage! Let us force into our souls the thorns of spiritual mortification. With the aid of Jesus and Mary let us put to death the earthly man within us, in order that the celestial man may live in recollection, simplicity, submission, humility, benevolence, devotion, holy love, and pious abandonment. Let the word be: For God, through God, in God.

## IX. The Carriage of the Cross - Patience

"If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." These are the words of our Blessed Saviour, recorded by Saint Matthew. (16:24)



To bear our cross with patience after the example of the meek Lamb, who suffered Himself to be led to punishment without a word of complaint, is our duty as Christians. And we have no need of seeking occasions to exercise our patience. The cross is sure to come to us from all sides. "Turn thyself above thee or below thee, outside of thee or within thee, and everywhere thou shalt find the cross." (*Following of Christ*, 2:12)

"Above us" it is the hand of God that hangs over us and presses us, whether it is to satisfy His justice, or to prove our love, or to fortify us against the enchantment of the false pleasures of the world, or to give our lives the seal and sign of Christian vocation and perfection.

"Below us" it is the demon, whose undying hatred pursues us without respite, and who is industrious to torment us. It is the demon that stimulates our senses, disturbs our imagination, excites our passions, disquiets our consciences, and endeavors to drive us to scrupulosity, discouragement, and despair.

"Outside of us" it is the wicked who conspire against our repose and labor for nothing so much as to injure us; or it is the foolish, who, without intending it, offend our sense of propriety; it may be persons of ill-formed characters to

whose asperities we have to submit; uncongenial natures which badly accord with ours; our dearest friends whom we see suffering; other friends who are incredulous, relatives without religion, an unfaithful spouse, wicked children, business troubles, the reverse of our fortunes, unsuccessful labors, the separation or death which makes vacant the fireside and crushes our hearts.

Within us it is the cross of sickness, inability to do what we honestly desire to do, the passions that worry us, imperfections which restrain us, defects which discourage us, sins which alarm us; and, if we are somewhat advanced in perfection, it is the grief of our exile, which increases in proportion to our love. What a cross, great God! what a cross! And do we bear it?

We are not, indeed, of the number of the rebellious who defile themselves by blasphemy, and make of the cross a cause of complaint against Providence, denying not only God's perfection but His existence, that they may be able to despise and attack at their pleasure the blind fatality to which they attribute all their evils, No, we belong not to them. But, alas! we are, for the most part, impatient. We murmur and complain; we show by our heart-breaking sighs that we wonder at ourselves for being so miserable. We even aggravate our sufferings by disagreeable comparisons, taking into account only those who appear more prosperous and happy, without thinking of those who have more trials than ourselves. If we only dared to say it, which our deep faith forbids, we would almost say that God is not just, or that He would show more justice in less severity; if we dared say it, our idea would be that God is not good, or that He would be better if He relieved us of misfortunes and gave us instead a greater share of happiness. In all this we forget our sins, which deserve to be chastised; our vocation as Christians, which obliges us to the imitation of a crucified



God; our perfection, which cannot be attained without sufferings, yet we are in haste to be free.

But Jesus has said: "You must take your cross." It is not a request or a counsel, but a command - so rigorous and irreformable that our salvation is bound up with its fulfillment. "Who taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:38)

Christians, understand it well and be convinced that the cross is unavoidable, and consequently ought to be borne in patience. If we must needs drag along with us the instrument of our punishment, let us at least do so in silence. And if we speak, let it be to confess with the good thief on the cross that we deserve it all, or lovingly to beg our dear Saviour and Master to pity our weakness and to temper the severity of His strokes by sending us some one of those consolations of which He knows the secret.

The words of the great apostle are encouraging:

"Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope." (Romans 5:4) Purified from our sins by sorrow and trial, we will await the more peacefully the eternal days in which no suffering will be lost: "For our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17). "Patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, deficient in nothing." (James 1:4)

## **X. The Crucifixion - Love of the Cross**

Jesus is not content to bear with admirable patience the cross on which we see Him expire. He had passionately desired it. In the Gospel of Saint Luke, chapter twelfth, we read these significant words: "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how I am tormented with the desire of seeing it accomplished!"



Jesus crucified proposes to our hearts a strange love - a love that would be barbarous if it had not passed through a divine heart, or if this heart had not revealed to us its sublime benefits. It is nothing less than the love of the cross.

To love the cross! That is too much! cries out human nature. All that I can do is to accept it with resignation, to bear it with patience; but to love it! That is difficult indeed.

Nature, thou art deceived. Thou hast an innate horror of the cross; thou dost enter a protest with all thy power against the trials whose austere visit thou receivest every day, and without the grace of God it would be impossible for thee to accept even one of them. Be silent; we do not consult thee when there is question of our Christian perfection. In thee we are only weak and powerless; it is only by God's grace we can be Christians, strong even to heroism.

Christ has made us His children; Christ calls us to His standard and conducts us to the conquest of His eternal kingdom.

How admirable yet how terrible was the espousal of Christ with the hard and blood-stained wood of the cross! The

eternal God saw it, was moved by it, and blessed it. Never before was a marriage so effectually blessed. From it has sprung "a chosen people, a holy nation." This race, this people, is made up of ourselves. Children of Jesus crucified, we ought to be living images of our Father, as He is the living image of His eternal Father. Apart from the incommunicable personality, Jesus Christ, the divine Word, is all that His Father is: "I and the Father are one." Apart from the incommunicable divinity of Christ, who has begotten us, we ought to be all that He is: one thing with Him. He suffers, we ought also to suffer; He was crucified, we ought to be crucified also; He loved the cross, with Him we should also love it.

Soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must follow our Leader on the same line of march He marked out, pass through all that He passed through, in order to enter with Him into His kingdom. Now, He chose a hard and shocking road; He kept it not only by voluntary and cheerful acceptance, by patient support of it, but also by an impassioned love of the cross.

O my Jesus! notwithstanding the repugnances of nature, Thou hast found in the ranks of regenerated humanity lovers of the cross. How noble they are! How earnestly they desire to resemble their divine Model! With what gladness they walk in His footsteps! Their good-will is sustained by so many graces that they would not live without painful trials. They demand them of God: "More! more! O Jesus, my Beloved! Either to suffer or to die. Still better: never to die, but always to suffer for Thee, if it be Thy good pleasure." If God proposes a recompense, they answer: "Lord, I wish for nothing but to suffer and be contemned for Thee."


Theirs is the triumph. Their immolated life is a never-ending canticle by which they celebrate the cross or die upon it every instant. Hear the devout author of the "Following of

Christ": " In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection against thy enemies; in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the cross is the sum-total of all virtues; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity " (Book 12) Hail, O cross! Hail, glory of the world! O sacred tree! press us within thy blood-stained arms and make us die of grief for love of Him who bore Thee!

My nature shudders at these strange words. I feel that without a very great grace I cannot take my place among the triumphant! O Jesus, my Master and my Model, give me this grace! O Mother of sorrows, Mother most chaste, most perfect lover of the cross, obtain for me this grace!

# **The Glorious Mysteries**

## **XI. The Resurrection - Faith**

By meditation on the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary we  will now enter into a celestial field, in which we will proceed to gather its divine fruits: faith, hope, charity, union with God, and perseverance.

The Saviour is taken from the cross and laid in the grave. A large stone, upon which authority, restless and uneasy, attaches its seal, covers His mortal remains. All is there - doctrine, law, institutions, promises, examples, benefits, miracles. All is lost, without any hope of being recovered, if corruption shall convict of falsehood the Man who proclaimed Himself the herald of truth, the truth itself; and the apostle has well said: "Our faith is vain."

But at an hour long foreseen and long foretold the rocks tremble, the grave opens, Christ rises again from the dead. Doctrine, law, institutions, promises, miracles, benefits, all rise again with Him! Our faith is true.

The resurrection of our Saviour is, then, pre-eminently the mystery of faith. It roots in the human soul that divine virtue which supports the whole edifice of the supernatural virtues.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it has for its object truths which our weak reason never could discover - truths which God conceals in the depths of His divine essence, and which no created nature could know if He had not revealed them. These truths are the eternal food of angels, and hence it may well be said, By faith we eat the bread of angels.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it has for its motive the infallible knowledge and supreme veracity of God who speaks, and who, by His word, protects the human mind against all error.

Faith is a divine virtue, for it does not rise spontaneously on the shallow shores of our intellectual nature. It is God that places its germs in our souls; it is God that watches over it and quickens its marvellous increase. To no purpose would the logic of facts and the power of reasoning press us to accept the truths of faith; convinced of the necessity of giving our assent to these truths, we are not, for that reason merely, true believers yet, except God gives us the gift of faith.

The divine virtue faith supports our hope as the foundation of a glorious edifice; faith shows us the supreme good to which our hearts ought sovereignly to attach themselves. It is the primary virtue; the virtue which necessarily takes the lead of all natural virtues, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11)

But let us not deceive ourselves: the faith by which we please God, the faith upon which the Christian virtues are firmly founded, the faith which is to conduct us to the summit of the spiritual life, is not a cowardly faith which is disconcerted at the least contradiction; it is not a languishing faith which truths poorly learned and soon forgotten scarcely maintain; it is not a drowsy faith which allows the prejudices and maxims of the world to prevail in our lives; it is not a dumb faith, or a faith without life-giving heat, afraid of asserting or of expanding itself.

The faith which pleases God is a firm faith, which the tempests of incredulity cannot shake, which the poison of doubt cannot penetrate. It is the faith of those Christians of whom Saint Paul speaks: "If so you continue grounded and fixed in the faith." (Colossians 1:23) The faith which pleases God is a lively faith, which always desires to be enlightened and instructed, and which drinks in the sacred waters of truth, crying out: Still more! still more! The faith which

pleases God is a sovereign faith, which regulates our every-day life and conforms it to the laws of the Gospel, the maxims of heaven, and the rules of perfection. The faith which pleases God is a generous faith, which asserts itself boldly, which undertakes valiant crusades against indifference, doubt, and incredulity, in public and in private, and, in the absence of eloquent discourses, strives to bring wandering and uncertain souls back again by prayer to the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ.

If such is our faith, we may rejoice in it. We are the Christians of whom Saint Paul spoke: "My just man liveth by faith." Let us rejoice indeed, yet let us not rest at that, but rather say in the words of the Gospel: "Lord, do thou increase my faith." (Luke 17)



## **XII. The Ascension of Our Lord Into Heaven - Hope**

Jesus Christ, in pointing out heaven to us in His glorious Ascension, awakens all the attention of our souls to the supreme object of Christian hope. This object is hidden from our carnal eyes; our weak reason is unable to discover it, but faith brings us into its sacred precincts. Herein we perceive the truth of the expression of Saint Paul: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for; the demonstration [evidence] of things that appear not." (Hebrews 11)



Christian, listen to the language of faith: All on earth is vanity; and no created object in which our dreams of happiness may be centred can possibly fill the immense chasm of our desires. Human glory, riches, beauty, love, knowledge, virtue itself say to us: I am not the happiness for which God has placed in your soul a desire, to a certain degree, infinite; look beyond me. "Seek the things that are above." Above! Yes, it is to heaven you are tending. Be not deceived by the fleeting images that pass under your notice. Be grounded in hope. One day the thick veil which hides from you the secrets of the Divinity will be torn away by the bountiful and merciful hand of your Creator. You will pass from the region of darkness into the realms of light; for it is written in Holy Scripture: "In Thy light we will see the light itself" (Psalm 35) And again in 1 Corinthians 13: "We will see Him face to face; we will see Him as He is."

As He is! How wonderful! That is to say, we will see Him in His infinite essence, in the harmony of His admirable perfections, in the acts of His incomprehensible life, in the trinity of persons and unity of nature, in all things which

comprise His knowledge and His power. You will be enraptured by so much beauty; you will feel yourself so environed by the infinite love, and yourself so penetrated with love and delight, that you will become like to the object of your felicity. "When He shall appear we will be like to Him." (1 John 3) Your very body, only vile dust, worth almost nothing, will go to rejoin your soul. Less corruptible, more agile, more brilliant than the light of the proud stars which illuminate the firmament, it will take possession of purified space, a limitless paradise, in which ineffable joys await its coming. The contemplation and possession of God in a transfigured flesh - behold your happiness for ever and for ever!

But how can I hope to attain this sublime end? My weak and grovelling nature is chained to the earth.. Be tranquil; you have heard your Saviour say to you before He ascended into heaven: "I go to prepare a place for you." True to His word, He shows to His divine Father His glorified wounds, and "He ever lives to be our perpetual intercessor"; and His intercession causes torrents of His grace to flow upon those whom He has redeemed. Grace is, therefore, in our souls the pledge and the very germ of the glory of heaven.

In what, then, consists Christian hope? Firmly to await the vision and eternal possession of God, and to obtain it, to look for His grace; to look for it, since God has promised it and is faithful to His promises; to look for it and never be discouraged, notwithstanding the length of our exile on earth, or the weakness of nature in being exposed to all manner of infirmities and tribulations, or the terrible demands of the passions, or the tenacity of our failings; to look for it without ever despairing of the divine mercy, notwithstanding the number, enormity, and depth of our falls, or their monstrous ingratitude; to look for it without confiding presumptuously in our own strength or counting

too much on the goodness of God, thereby to be emboldened in sin, nor expecting God to come to us at the last moment, when we have forgotten Him many years; to look for it, finally, by praying for grace and corresponding with grace. This is the meaning of Christian hope.

What a strange spectacle the world gives us in relation to Christian hope! See the vast throngs that rush eagerly and blindly after all manner of earthly goods, as if these were their only end. In beholding them who can think men were made for heaven? If we cannot possibly bring them to a halt they will indeed deceive themselves. Let us not be moved or troubled by the scandal they give, but rather direct our attention to those who live here below conformably to their hopes. Let us see them despising generously the goods of the world, incessantly resisting the gross desires which bend the soul to the earth; marching joyfully on the road of duty, receiving piously, preserving carefully, and ardently developing the graces which Heaven sends upon their souls. Let us listen to their languishing grief because of the length of their pilgrimage and the sorrows of their exile; in them it is easy to see the future possessors of the divine essence, citizens of eternal mansions.

Let us take part in their canticle of praise, and with them sing: O Lord, Thou hast promised us a happier land; our souls rejoice in Thy promise! Give us Thy grace and we will go into Thy house. "I have rejoiced in the things spoken to me; we will go into the house of the Lord."

## **XIII. The Descent of the Holy Ghost - Charity**

What is this Spirit Jesus sends that makes the roof of the upper room tremble, and diffuses itself upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost? It is the same which in



heaven produces the movement of infinite life and completes the divine family; it is the perfective force, the essential substance of the love of the Father and of the Son; it is charity itself. He comes to bring us charity, as we learn from the Apostle of the Gentiles: "The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." (Romans 5:5). Faith and hope are great and splendid virtues, but "charity is greater than they."

"Without charity," says Saint Thomas of Aquin, "the highest and most estimable goods are without union or cohesion; charity unites (connects) them. Without charity all good things are fragile; charity gives them stability. Without charity goods of an inferior order tend, to separation from the supreme good; charity elevates them, transforms them, and makes of all goods one only good. 'Above all things have charity,' says Saint Paul; 'it is the bond of perfection.'" (Colossians 3)

All that in which we make perfection consist only brings us imperfectly and in a manner more or less near to the eternal type.

The possession of earthly goods, the exercise of command, makes us participate in the sovereign dominion of God; intellectual culture in His infinite knowledge, moral virtues

in His adorable sanctity. Faith gives us admission into His secrets and leads us on to His beatitude, but charity fixes us in Him and roots us in His love. "God is charity; he who has charity abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4) The day will come when the universe will be folded like a book; its goods, its beauties, and its joys will slip from our hands; science will be no more; miracles will cease; the prophecies will find emptiness under their feet; faith will vanish in presence of the eternal revelations; hope, having come to its object, will end in that object; but charity will always remain. "Charity never faileth." (1 Corinthians 13)

Above all things let us have charity. It is the greatest honor, the most perfect beauty, the most imperative yet winning of duties. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." (Mark 12)

Is it thus we love God? Admitting that we make pretensions to His love, does not the whole tenor of our lives give these pretensions a shameful and cruel contradiction?

The object of true love is often thought of; but we can hardly spare a few moments in our daily occupation to raise our souls to God, the supreme object of all love. Many hours are spent in worldly and sometimes very frivolous engagements in which God is allowed no share. We hear people speak freely and frequently of those whom they love and of themselves, of their perfections and merits; but every conversation in which God or the affairs of God are brought in seems irrelevant or tiresome. We are too much inclined to treat of our own little interests and passions, and to expatiate upon trifles and illusions.

The will of those whom we love is obeyed with alacrity, but we reluctantly apply ourselves to the holy laws by which

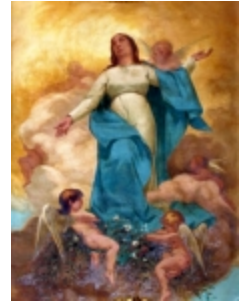
God's will is expressed, even when we do not put our own caprices or culpable desires above them.

We give ourselves totally to those we love; we are prepared to sacrifice for them our most precious goods, even life itself; but for God we make a very small place indeed in our paltry existence. Knowing our weakness, He refrains from exactions; but, supposing for His glory there was need of our blood or of our life - nay, even less than that, of our earthly affections, of our temporal goods, of our pleasures - would we have the courage to say to Him, Take them?

O my God! if it is true that I love thee, my love is yet a very poor thing. But have pity upon the little germ that Thou hast planted in my heart, and make it grow into that divine charity which Thou expectest of me, and with which the apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost. May the Holy Virgin, who embalmed the room in which they were assembled with the sweet perfume of Her virtues, and who, by the fervor of Her desires, brought down upon Her the Spirit of God, deign to obtain this grace for us.

## **XIV. The Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin - Union with God**

We have seen the Blessed Mary before Her glorious Assumption languish with love of Her Son and aspire to a union with Him in heaven with all the powers of Her soul. This union had already commenced. The absence of Her Dearly-Beloved had made no void in the heart of our holy Mother. With the eyes of the soul She still beheld Him who had ascended into heaven; She conversed mysteriously with Him; She poured forth Her heart upon His Sacred Heart: She was with Him, by Him, and in Him; She was one with Him.



Union with God is the fruit of the virtues we have been gathering, especially of charity. This is the reason it is so profound, so intimate, so constant in holy souls; so many and so great prodigies are seen in it that it can be ill-understood by the generality of men. Ecstasies, raptures, flights of the soul towards heaven, liquefactions, annihilations, mystical transformations - who is it that clearly understands all these? Nevertheless the most humble and unaspiring souls are permitted to prepare themselves for at least timid and humble advances in this direction.

Why does not charity effect in the Christian life that which human love effects in the natural life?

When absence or death takes away from us those whom we love affectionate memory keeps them near us still. Their image, the moment it is recalled, comes before us in immaterial light, although we cannot see them with the eyes

of the body. They look upon us, and we upon them; they speak to us, and we to them; we believe that we enjoy their endearments, and we lavish upon them the marks of our affection. Love realizes their presence.

Is it true, O my God! that the love of our hearts is more forcible in uniting us to creatures than in uniting us with Thee? True indeed Thou art a "hidden God"; but the Christian soul, imbued with the great virtues of faith, hope, and charity, ought to rise to Thee and cling to Thee, not only sometimes, but always; that is to say, it ought to live in Thy presence, pour forth its love to Thee, and be penetrated by Thee.

What a comfort, a joy, and a glory it would be to be able to say: The world is no longer anything to me; I despise its goods and its caresses, its judgments and its persecutions; I am united to God!

I am united to God! Nothing now touches me, or pleases me, or troubles me, or affrights me. All the allurements of the world and all the furies of hell may conspire against me in vain. My pleasure and my trust is in God.

I am united to God! I see Him in all things. Creatures adorned with a ray of beauty reveal to me His infinite perfections. The miseries of my brethren recall to me the sorrows of His Son. In all that is against me I recognize His justice and adore it; in all that favors me I see and kiss His loving hand. I see Him everywhere, and He sees me. My thoughts, desires, and actions germinate and flourish under His benign and merciful care.

I am united to God! He speaks to my soul by those whom He has charged with my instruction and direction, and especially by the holy grace which revives in me the echo of



His words. I listen to Him; He listens to me. I praise Him; I bless Him; I deliver myself up to His holy will. I give Him my joys, my sorrows, my consolations and trials, my glory and my humiliation, my leisure and my labors, my actions great and small, my spirit, my heart, my life. I am all His; He is all mine. "I live now, not I, but God my Saviour liveth in me."

I am united to God! He gives me an experimental knowledge of His goodness, His sweetness, His greatness, and the grandeur of His perfections. This knowledge has embraced my will; that embrace has produced joy; this joy has excited my desires; these desires have been rewarded with satiety; satiety has in turn caused gladness, and gladness unalterable sweetness; this sweetness brings repose, according to the word of the Lord in the mouth of the prophet: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest." (Isaiah 32)

I am united to God! Behold what I ought to say; but, alas! my miserable life has scarcely more relation to God than the life of one estranged from Him. He does not withdraw Himself from me, but I withdraw myself from Him to wander among creatures. Pardon me, O my God! and bring me back to Thee, and make me ever live by faith, hope, and charity in Thy blessed company until the striking of that happy hour in which I shall be so intimately united to Thee that nothing can separate us for ever.

## **XV. The Coronation of the Most Blessed Virgin - Perseverance**

"Be faithful unto death," says our Lord, "and I will give you the crown of life." (Apocalypse 2) It is this fidelity that God rewards in the Coronation of the Most Blessed Virgin. It is the mystery which speaks to us of perseverance. Saint Thomas of Aquin tells us that "perseverance is the virtue by which the good that is in us endures until it is consummated." In all works truly great this virtue is necessary. True and solid success is only attainable by relentless labor which triumphs over all obstacles.



The wonder is to see the constancy and efforts expended on projects which those who engage in them hardly approve in their conscience. And how can we be inconstant or slothful when there is question of accomplishing the grand design of our sanctification and of perfecting in ourselves the work of grace?

Let us bear this in mind: the innocence and virtue of our past life cannot secure our eternal happiness in the future if we prove untrue to ourselves. "No one putting his hand to the plough and looking back is worthy of the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 9) "He who persevereth to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 10) To have participation in Christ is the condition of salvation. But we are partakers with Him only "when we hold the beginning of His substance firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3) To be virtuous today is good; but the virtues run as in a race, and only one is crowned - perseverance. Other virtues merit the crown, but perseverance alone receives it. When God will have us read at His tribunal the book of our lives, He will not stop us at

the first page, but we must read it even to the last; that will be the page of life and benediction if we shall have persevered in good works, otherwise a page of malediction and of eternal death.

But why should we think so seriously of perseverance? How do we know but that it is, like predestination, a gratuitous gift of God? Let us not wander from the truth and run into the recklessness of those who, considering the divine decrees as mere fatalities, do not consider themselves obliged to make any effort, under the pretext that it is necessary to let the grace of God work of itself.

In answer we must bear in mind that perseverance is a gift truly, but a gift which can be, to a certain extent, the reward of our good-will and of our generous efforts. God allows Himself to be moved by the anxiety of a soul to receive and render fruitful the grace He imparts; for, as He tells us, "to him that hath it shall be given, and he shall abound." (Matthew 13) One grace, heartily cultivated by our correspondence with it, attracts another grace. Thus a mysterious chain of divine gifts invisibly forms itself in our lives and links them at last in heaven. To this chain of divine gifts necessarily corresponds an uninterrupted succession of strong resolutions, which renew the impulse our souls receive conjointly from grace and from our good-will. Thus, says the Angelic Doctor, "perseverance depends on fortitude," which is another word for strong and lasting resolution. Philosophers tell us that we must have a firm and constant will to acquire any virtue; how much more so that which gives duration to them all!

I deceive myself. Properly speaking, we cannot acquire perseverance; for whatever may be the relationship of our correspondence with the renewal of graces, it depends on the good-will of God to give us this final grace. Not being

able to make ourselves worthy of it, let us endeavor to obtain it by humble and fervent prayer. Jesus has said: "Ask, and you shall receive." Confiding in this promise, we make our wants known to Thee, O Blessed Jesus! and we beg this final grace of Thee through the intercession of our holy Mother. And, although the number of the persevering may be small indeed, we hope to be of that small number; for Thou wilt hear the prayer so often repeated in the Holy Rosary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of death."

# About This EBook

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